TL7412-1

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION ON ITS INDONESIAN STUDY TOUR

Honorable Parliamentarians,

Welcome to Indonesia, and the government which boasts the chair of the Non-Aligned movement and a long list of human rights violations. You are also to be welcomed by the New Order government, whose period of governing was inaugurated with the massacre of approximately one million people, followed by continued massacres such as Tanjung Priok (1984), the Mysterious Killings of 1984, Ujung Pandang (1987), Aceh (1990), Lampung (1989) and Dili (1991).

Welcome to Indonesia, where the last 25 years of development have brought violations of human rights, in the form of grossly unfair compensation payment to farmers for transformation of their farming land for development purposes (as evident in the Kedung Ombo case).

Welcome to Indonesia, the country of tropical rainforests which, for the sake of foreign exchange incomes, disappear at a rate of no less than 1 million hectares per annum, resulting in the marginalisation of forest communities, and the disappearance of their cultures, from their forest homes. Prime examples are Siberut, Yamdena, Sulawesi, Kalimantan and Irian Jaya.

Welcome to Indonesia, where workers are forbidden to organise, where political and civil rights are repressed, where detainees are tortured sometimes to their death. Welcome to a country where to speak out and to organise means jail.

It is no coincidence that in an international climate which is becoming more favourable for the realisation of human rights, certain events have preceded your arrival. These include the stoppage of military educational aid (IMET) by the US government, while the Australian government continues to train Indonesian military officers and carry out joint military exercises with the Indonesian military, the awarding of of the Reebok Human Rights Award to Fernando Araujo (East Timorese activist now in prison on a subversion charge), and the Japanese government's statement that it is now to link its aid disbursements with the realisation of human rights and democracy. It is also no coincidence that your request to visit Dili has been refused, with the reason that the sovereignty of the Indonesian government may not be disrupted by foreign elements. On the other hand, we believe that on the basis of the universal principles of human rights all people have the right to question, discuss and struggle to overcome human rights violations. Moreover, while the Question of Timor is on the UN agenda, and is discussed by most countries excepting the Australian government, we feel it is only appropriate that a referendum to be held there.

Considering the above, we very much appreciate this opportunity to request you, as Honorable Parliamentarians, to urge the Australian government, in the spirit of international co-operation and in the interests of upholding human rights and democracy in the region, to:

1. call on the Indonesian government to hold a referendum in East Timor to allow the East Timorese people an opportunity to freely determine their own fate.
2. frequently and continually monitor the condition of East Timorese detainees and call on the Indonesian government to release all political prisoners.
3. call on the Australian government to ensure that development aid is not used for development projects which violate human rights by marginalising farming or forest dwelling communities from their land with unfair compensation payment.
4. call on the Australian government to ensure that, in its efforts to expand trade with Indonesia, Australian capital investment in Indonesia does not work to support the repression of workers' wages and rights to organise.

As a final note, we would like to reiterate our demands as presented to Prime Minister Paul Keating on the event of his visit to Indonesia in March (enclosed).

We would also like to say that we take responsibility for the validity of the abovementioned human rights violations, because we are also the victims of sich violations.

We wish you luck on your Study Tour

INFIGHT: (Indonesian Front for the Defence of Human Rights)

Jakarta, 20 October 1992

Saleh Abdullah
Co-ordinator